

Message Text

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64

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FM AMCONSUL HALIFAX

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 304

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

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UNCLAS QUEBEC 167

PREMIER BOURASSA ANNOUNCED LAST NIGHT GENERAL ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD IN QUEBEC OCTOBER 29. HIS TAPED, BROADCAST STATEMENT ASSERTED LIBERAL PARTY HAD LARGELY COMPLETED MANDATE FOR WHICH ELECTED IN 1970, NAMELY, GET ECONOMY MOVING, CLEAN UP PUBLIC FINANCES, IMPROVE SOCIAL CLIMATE, AND AFFIRM QUEBEC ROLE WITHIN CANADA. IN VIEW CHANGES REPRESENTATION OCCASIONED BY NEW ELECTORAL MAP. HE WAS SEEKING NEW MANDATE "FOR NEXT PHASE QUEBEC'S DEVELOPMENT."

DURING SEPTEMBER HAD BEEN GROWING INDICATIONS ELECTIONS MIGHT BE CALLED THIS FALL. PARTI QUEBECOIS HAS LONG CLAIMED ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD THIS YEAR, AND HAS BEEN ACTIVELY CAMPAIGNING FOR SEVERAL MONTHS; IS PROBABLY BEST PREPARED OF ALL PARTIES. SINCE ELECTION DUPUIS AS LEADER, CREDITISTES HAVE BEEN TAUNTING GOVERNMENT IT TOO WEAK AND CORRUPT TO OUTLAST WINTER, AND IT TOO HAS BEEN CAMPAIGNING LATELY. PRESS HAS NATURALLY PLAYED UP SPECULATION, AND BOURASSA DECISION AT LEAST PARTLY REACTION TO OPPOSITION PRESSURES.

BOURASSA ALLEGEDLY WAVERED UNTIL VERY RECENTLY OVER GENERAL, PARTIAL OR NO ELECTIONS. MANY LIBERAL DEPUTIES, PARTICULARLY FROM RURAL RIDINGS, SAID TO HAVE OPPOSED ELECTIONS NOW, THOUGH IDEA FAVORED BY PARTY MANAGERS. AT CAUCUS MEETING YESTERDAY,
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FOUR PROMINENT MINISTERS, GARNEAU, ST. PIERRE, COURNOYER

AND L'ALLIER, REPORTEDLY OPPOSED DECISION. CALLING ELECTIONS BEFORE END OF NORMAL TERM, AND FOR VERY GENERAL REASONS ADVANCED BY BOURASSA, OF COURSE, HAS ELEMENT POLITICAL OPPORTUNISM. THERE ARE THOSE, INCLUDING SOME LIBERAL BACKERS, WHO SUGGEST THAT BECAUSE OF HARD TIME GOVERNMENT HAD LAST ASSEMBLY SESSION OVER ALLEGED UNDERWORLD LINKS, EXCESSIVE PATRONAGE, LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION POLICY, AND MANAGEMENT JAMES BAY PROJECT, ELECTIONS NOW ALSO HAVE ELEMENT POLITICAL ESCAPISM.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AT PRESENT COMPOSED 68 LIBERALS, 15 UN, 11 CAMPAIGN PERIOD WILL BE MINIMUM UNDER NEW LAW, 32 DAYS, THUS SHORTEST IN QUEBEC HISTORY. BOURASSA DEPARTED FROM QUEBEC TRADITION BY NOT ANNOUNCING ELECTIONS AT PRESS CONFERENCE, AND BY DECLINING SEE PRESS AFTERWARDS.
MELBY

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